A

Borders College

Finance & Resources Committee

Meeting at 16:30 Thursday 30 November 2023

On MS Teams

Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility and Date	Action Status
43/22	Agree a brief summary of Key Performance Indicators for this meeting.	VP F&CS Director of Finance & Procurement	
39/23	Amendments to be made to Annual Report to Regional Board and circulated via email for approval	L Mirley I Earp	
55/23	Finance related training session to be organised for board members.	VP F&CS I Earp	

DRAFT

Borders College

Finance and Resources Committee

Meeting at 16:30 Thursday 30 November 2023

On MS Teams

Minutes

ITEM	MINUTE
Present	Bernie Quinn (Chair – for this meeting only) Pete Smith (Principal) Ray McCowan Ugo Mbaezue
In Attendance	Ingrid Earp (Regional Board Secretary) Sara Wilson (Director of Finance and Procurement) Scott Moncrieff Debbie Kerr (Director of People Services) Robert Hewitt (Director of Estates & Facilities) Suzie Hartley (Minutes)
47/23	**Chair's Welcome** The Chair welcomed everyone.
48/23	**Declaration of Conflict of Interest** No areas of conflict were raised.
49/23	**Register of Members' Interest** No additions to the register were requested.
50/23	**Apologies for Absence** Apologies were noted from Samantha Hamilton-Green and Lynn Mirley and B Quinn was noted to be chairing today's meeting, in Lynn's absence.
51/23	**Minutes of Previous Meeting held 21 September 2023** No inaccuracies were raised and all agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of discussions.
52/23	**Matters Arising** No matters were raised.
SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION	
53/23	**Strategic Risk Register (Paper B, K Robb, ToR 2.15)** A productive discussion was held at the recent Board Development Day regarding the new Risk Register format. Five risks were assigned to this committee – detailed in 5.1 of the report. The register was reviewed at the last SLT meeting on 20 November and no new risks were identified.

DRAFT

	Members are supportive of the new format and noted their appreciation of the clarity around the risks and which committee these are delegated to and also the consistency of practice.
54/23	**<u>Committee Self-Evaluation Outcomes (Paper C, L Mirley/I Earp)</u>** Board Secretary advised that the report comprises of three responses and encouraged those who had not yet replied, to provide their comments or concerns. The Chair felt the report is indicative of the current position and that there is room to increase the overall score. It was raised whether members are aware of their responsibilities and suggested to meet separately out with the committee cycle to take time to reflect, raise any issues and evaluate progress made so far. It was also proposed to mirror this practice across the other two sub committees.
55/23	**<u>Business (Finance) Review and Update (Paper D, S Wilson, ToR 2.1/2.4)</u>** The Director of Finance & Procurement acknowledged the earlier suggestion for training and development for board members and felt this would also help enhance understanding of the financial reporting. The report details the quarter one position and updated forecasts and focusses on projections rather than historical data. Section 5 covers quarter one revenue, examining staff changes and grants and how these have been spent this year and carried forward to the year end. Appendix 2 highlights the need to bring in additional funding. Although disappointed by the shift from surplus to deficit, primarily due to staff costs, optimism remains for a recovery by quarter two, leveraging existing vacancies and incoming funds and there is confidence that the £80k deficit can be addressed and brought back to a £1k surplus. The budget revision includes the curriculum review, which has yielded savings although not as much as anticipated, due to additional posts required, VS scheme approvals, 3% increase in SPPA rates, alongside other minor costs and adjustments. Project breakdowns across the curriculum revealed variances among areas, necessitating some adjustments. A member raised concerns about disparities, particularly questioning the confidence in expected income and if 'clawing back' funding would normally be relied upon to 'balance the books'. The Director of Finance and Procurement explained that internal coding changes in relation to Support Services had led to disparities and that variances occurred for two reasons: firstly, the outcome of the curriculum review prompted reclassification between two areas, and secondly, the consideration of updated credits. These adjustments don't impact the bottom line however as allocations to each area are based on predictions and the subsequent allocations derived from them. Members were reminded that the financial and academic years both run from August to July. VP Finance & Corporate Services suggested organising a training session and will liaise with I Earp to facilitate this. **ACTION: VP F&CS / Board Secretary**

DRAFT

	A query was raised about the Mental Health Transitions Fund and whether this had changed. Members were informed that this funding has been consistent for the past four years. However, this year, announcements regarding mental health funding were delayed and although funding was provided, this was at a reduced rate and referred to differently as 'Mental Health Transitions Fund'. It is suspected that the likelihood of obtaining funding next year is slim, however, the College plan on carrying over and utilising any underspend and have committed to continue funding mental health staff from their own budget until October - now extended for the entire year. Regarding in-house staff, some have moved on, but A. Brydon, Director of Student Services is effectively overseeing the management and improvement of the service and will possibly look to facilitate mental health support through external organisations rather than 'in-house' staff.
56/23	**<u>Annual People Services Report (Paper E, D Kerr)</u>** Director of People Services, D Kerr gave an overview of her report highlighting key areas including staffing numbers, equalities, and the ongoing pay award negotiations with unions, EIS and UNISON. A full and final pay offer has been made and unions have yet to feedback. Concerns were raised about potential further strike action including ASOS and it was noted that a previous EIS ballot lacked turnout which has prompted a renewed call for a mandate to strike, with action likely to commence in February. Director of People Services drew members' attention to Appendix 1 which details recommendations in relation to the leadership development program's aims to foster fair work practices and ethical management among managers. Appendix 2 showcases the Sustainability Calendar outlining monthly communications for various events such as Tree Week and COP28. R McCowan expressed appreciation for the detailed report. He acknowledged the disruption caused by ASOS and recognised the need for an assertive and consistent response this time, aiming for zero disruption. Concerns were raised about lecturer obligations and ensuring they fulfil their duties to mark. It was highlighted that resulting is written into employment contracts and that there is plan to track and monitor marking non-compliance using MIS. Potential deductions from lecturers were also discussed as a last resort. The report highlighted an increase in short-term absence days, which is attributed to a return to pre-COVID ways of working. Measures are in place to provide prompt support to staff returning to the workplace, including referring to occupational health if needed. Discrepancies between GPTW survey figures and SFC figures were raised, with queries about survey completion. It was clarified that various measures were taken to ensure survey participation, including providing time and access via smartphones. D Kerr and S Moncrieff left the meeting.

DRAFT

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION	
57/23	**<u>Public Sector Climate Change Duties Report (Paper F, R Hewitt)</u>** Director of Estates and Facilities, R Hewitt highlighted the key areas from the Public Sector Climate Change Duties Report; - notable shift in emissions from the previous year, marking an expected return to pre-pandemic levels. - multiple targets are being tracked against the Sustainability Strategy, surpassing current targets set to conclude in 2025. - areas requiring further work are identified in waste management, electric vehicles (EVs), Hawick building management, and initiatives to further reduce the College's carbon footprint. - The focus for the upcoming Sustainability Strategy until 2030 follows a narrower scope, including elements such as homeworking, commuting and procurement. - plans to decarbonise the Galashiels campus have been temporarily halted due to a requirement to upgrade the Galashiels power network and the lack of funding available to facilitate this. Conversations with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), EAUC, and Scottish Government have highlighted awareness of the issue. - An alternative plan is underway to apply for additional funding specifically for the decarbonisation of Hawick campus, which doesn't require the power upgrade needed at Galashiels. **Members comments/questions** An inquiry was raised about project funding and potential College funding contributions. R Hewitt explained that the £300 million fund being applied for is released in stages and that this is grant-funding, not match funding. However, potential alternative options may require exploration. The College are also prepared for any necessary survey work and are confident in meeting set targets. Concerns were raised about the financial aspect, given the College's inability to borrow and noting that the required funding would exhaust the entire capital budget, impacting capacity to support the life cycle fund. Suggestions were made to potentially spread the costs over a few years, although this might impact the ability to meet funding utilisation deadlines. R McCowan questioned whether all work is reliant on the receipt of funding and raised concerns about balancing sustainability ambitions with associated costs, especially if a net cost is incurred, given the restricted budgetary environment. VP Finance & Corporate Services highlighted the substantial external grant funding obtained for major projects, crediting R Hewitt and R Hill for their work in securing these funds. She explained that some projects don't necessitate significant capital investments which could allow potential net savings. The current phase primarily involves smaller, more manageable projects, with larger-scale ones in the pipeline and the focus remains on seeking opportunities that don't demand substantial investment while aiming for net savings. R Hewitt also highlighted efforts to collaborate with other organisations to share finances and resources. R McCowan commended the extensive efforts and acknowledged the complexity and challenges in finding a balance.

DRAFT

58/23	**<u>Cyber Security Update (Paper G, S Moncrieff)</u>** S Moncrieff presented the Cyber Security Update report. The key highlights were; - recent application for Cyber Essentials accreditation was successful. - achieving Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation is challenging this year due to changes in criteria. Additional evidence is currently being compiled with an aim to achieve this by Christmas. - phishing campaign held to test staff awareness. This is to be followed by on-campus training sessions scheduled for 23 January 2024. A further phishing campaign is planned post-training with the aim to increase awareness and decrease vulnerabilities. - There are plans for a network re-design and the procurement process is set to begin early 2024, with implementation anticipated to be spread across summer 2024/summer 2025. The aim is to eliminate a single point of failure and ensure continued access for all users in case of building unavailability. Discussions with internet providers are underway with updates expected closer to Christmas. - A recent audit on payroll returned low-risk advisories, including a recommendation to reduce the number of log-in attempts from 10 to five, before locking users out. **Members comments/discussion** A member inquired about the statistics following the first phishing email and was informed that 28% of staff clicked on the link, with 8% following through until the end and completing all of their details, amounting to 27 staff in total. Swipe badges and access to College areas was also queried. R Hewitt reassured that there are only two areas that can be accessed by swipe badges and that access is revoked as soon as notification is received. A member raised concerns about the delay in training, post phishing campaign and asked what the mechanisms are around ensuring appropriate attendance. The implications of not achieving Cyber Essentials Plus were also queried. Members were advised that additional training avenues and monitoring strategies for staff training are in place and that all training should be completed by the end of January. P Smith noted the historical shift in Scottish Government insistence on Cyber Essentials Plus and its potential implications from a reputational standpoint, although no instances of funding or contract implications have been reported. B Quinn indicated his support for the reduction of login attempts and inquired about information sharing and whether this is a regular practice amongst colleagues and peers. S Moncrieff alluded to an active learning community which encourages collaboration and skill-sharing.
59/23	**<u>Papers for Publication (Standing Item)</u>** I Earp will check with K Robb for clarification if needed and assured that they try to publish as many papers as possible.
60/23	**Any Other Business (Standing Item)** No other items were raised.

DRAFT

61/23	**Date of Next Meeting** The date of the next meeting is Thursday 14 March 2024 at 4:00pm via Teams.

Signed…..…… **Signed…..……**

Chair **Board Secretary**

DRAFT